

TRIBUTE TO HOUSING OPTIONS &
GERIATRIC ASSOCIATION RE-
SOURCES, INC.

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2001

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Housing Options & Geriatric Association Resources, Inc., an organization dedicated to improving the lives of homeless, elderly, mentally ill, physically challenged, and HIV/AIDS infected individuals in the Bronx. This invaluable organization celebrates the grand opening of its Scattered Site Housing Program and Supported Housing Unit on November 15, 2001.

H.O.G.A.R.'s mission is not only to raise awareness of the housing and health issues facing burdened groups of society, but also to provide ways of dealing with these issues. Not only does H.O.G.A.R. spread the word that a number of individuals diagnosed as mentally ill end up on the streets each year, but it also maintains a program to find housing for these people and has even opened a 12-bed supported housing unit that emphasizes community reintegration.

Mr. Speaker, H.O.G.A.R. also recently implemented the Scatter Site Housing Program for HIV/AIDS infected people. This program provides relocation assistance, access to counseling services, access to primary health care, recreational activities, daily life skills training, and classes in healthy meal preparation to name just a few things. Essentially it is a program to ensure that people living with AIDS, actually have some quality of life. Often those who are sick and poor are left to the wayside. H.O.G.A.R. is there to pick these individuals up and to show them how to stand alone.

An amazing group of men and women give H.O.G.A.R. its heart and soul and continually fuel its efforts. It is because of them that H.O.G.A.R. exists and succeeds in its mission. We will never be able to accurately assess exactly how many lives H.O.G.A.R. has saved or how many lives it has helped give meaning and hope to. We can only be sure that any addition to this organization is worthy of great celebration. That is why my son, Councilman elect, and myself are so honored to be named special guests of H.O.G.A.R.'s grand opening of these two new program units.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the H.O.G.A.R. directors and staff for their immeasurable contributions to those most in need and most overlooked and in thanking them for their ceaseless efforts.

THE FOREIGN GOVERNMENT
OWNERSHIP ACT OF 2001

HON. W. J. (BILLY) TAUZIN

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2001

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, last week, Senator HOLLINGS and I joined together to introduce legislation to emphasize the prohibition on foreign government ownership of American telecommunications and broadcast infrastructure. This is not a new concept. It has been

the law for more than fifty years in order to protect the American national interest.

We have been dismayed this year by the FCC's approval of the Deutsche Telekom acquisition of VoiceStream Wireless Communications and the SES-Astra acquisition of GE Americom Communications. For several years, we have repeatedly expressed the most serious reservations about the Commission's interpretation of the foreign government ownership provisions of Section 310 of the Communications Act. We have repeatedly pointed out that companies controlled by foreign governments are too often motivated by political considerations that may be against the interests of the United States rather than by the working of the competitive marketplace.

Notwithstanding our stated concerns, the Commission approved the Deutsche Telekom acquisition of VoiceStream in April of this year, revealing the clear differences between the Congress and members of the Commission about the meaning and application of Section 310. The proposal of SES-Astra to acquire GE Americom presented the same concerns, and I asked the Commission to conduct a "vigorous review;" of the proposed acquisition to assure that our national interests were protected. However, instead of the vigorous review that was needed and requested, the Commission allowed the International Bureau to rapidly approve this significant acquisition in a pro forma manner. Indeed, once that approval had been given, SES-Astra revealed that it had not fully revealed the substantial extent of foreign control in the company, but the FCC staff again gave its prompt pro forma approval with no public notice.

Commissioner Michael J. Copps issued a statement noting that SES-Astra's failure to reveal the full extent of its foreign ownership and stating that the Telecommunications Act required the FCC to provide the opportunity for public notice. We agree. We believe the Commission has exceeded its authority in this area and has not weighed fully the full national interest considerations in foreign government ownership of our telecommunications infrastructure, especially in the wake of recent events that have heightened our concerns about the security of our homeland.

Accordingly, we introduced legislation to make it clear that foreign governments are not allowed to own or control American telecommunications, satellite, or broadcast networks, whether directly or indirectly. This legislation does not break new ground, but rather simply reaffirms, in no uncertain terms, that the telecommunications, broadcast, and Internet facilities that underlie our freedom of speech and our economy cannot be made vulnerable to the actions of foreign governments.

We suggest that it serves neither the public interest nor the interest of the applicants for the FCC to approve any mergers of this type, or for that matter to allow the SES-Astra acquisition of GE Americom to go forward without the full Commission seriously addressing our concerns.

AMERICAN SPIRIT FRAUD
PREVENTION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. CLIFF STEARNS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 13, 2001

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, in the days following the terrible tragedy that befell America on September 11, 2001, we have experienced a reaffirmation of the American Spirit in the heroic acts of some Americans and the selfless giving of others. Americans have opened their hearts to the families of the victims of the September 11th tragedy and heeded the calls for assisting those victims. Americans from all walks of life have to date contributed in excess of \$1 billion to charities and other organizations supporting the victims of the tragedy. While the overwhelming majority of fund-raising efforts in response to the September 11th terrorist acts are legitimate, unfortunately, there have been a few fraudulent fundraising efforts capitalizing on this National tragedy.

As unacceptable as it may be, the September 11th tragedy, as other tragic emergencies, have spun deceit and fraud perpetrated by unscrupulous persons manipulating the emotions of generous citizens so that they may fraudulently line their pockets. Scam artists often use the telephone and Internet to prey on emotions—for example, by being rude when asked for specific information or insinuating that people who decline to give are unpatriotic. By taking advantage of the moment and acting quickly, these criminals are often able to raise thousands of dollars before they are caught. And when they're caught, the FTC has tepid legal authority to make them pay for their offense.

H.R. 2985, the American Spirit Fraud Prevention Act, introduced by Reps. DEAL and BASS, takes measures to prevent scam artists from capitalizing on national tragedies and takes additional steps to penalize those practices. The bill takes the needed step of strengthening the Federal Trade Commission Act so the Commission can punish those unscrupulous scam artists.

The bill gives the Commission the power, during times of presidentially-declared national emergency or natural disaster, to crack down hard on unfair or deceptive acts or practices that take advantage of the emergency or disaster. If the Commission acts to stop the fraud administratively, this bill doubles the civil penalties from \$11,000 to \$22,000 for each violation. Alternatively, if the Commission opts to go to federal district court for an injunction to stop the fraud, the bill gives the Commission the authority to demand civil penalties of \$22,000 for each violation, a punitive power the FTC currently does not have at their disposal. The increased penalties are available for unfair or deceptive acts or practices committed within one year after the President terminates the emergency period under the National Emergencies Act or within one year of the disaster declaration under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

Those are needed changes to the FTC Act. It is unfortunate that such changes were necessitated by the horrific events of September 11th. Yet, we must put all those engaged in fraud or contemplating fraudulent acts that